

Maraṇānussati

Mindfulness on
DEATH

To begin, contemplate beings who were formerly seen enjoying life but who have now died. Then arouse a sense of urgency by reflecting:

“Uncertain is life,
certain is death,”

“I cannot avoid
death,”

“I might die at any
moment,”

“Death is inevitable,”

“I have death as my
end,”

“Alas, before long this
body, void of
consciousness, will lie
on the earth, useless as
a rotten log.”

When one feels lazy, becomes negligent, and has no interest in practice, it is advisable to practice mindfulness of death. It is a tonic filling one with a sense of urgency that now, this life, this moment is the opportunity to practice.

Right now is when the power and opportunity to steer one’s course exists. Human life is incredibly rare; rarer still is hearing the dharma. Life is fleeting, and practicing mindfulness of death paradoxically energizes and enlivens one..

Too often we forget that we really might die soon. And as a consequence we become exceedingly negligent. “Today is when the effort should be made, for – who knows? – tomorrow death will come. There is no bargaining with Mortality and his mighty horde.” “Life endures only for a single breath.”

Moved by spiritual urgency, one is far less prone to waste time in the insatiable pursuit of sensual pleasures. These offer no promise of lasting happiness, but can cause us great harm if we become attached to them, just as ants die inside a honey bottle attempting to enjoy a taste of sweetness. As one continues to contemplate one’s approaching death, urgency is aroused, providing a great boost of energy to practice.